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Current Status of Information Literacy Practices in Medical Libraries of Pakistan

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Abstract

The paradigm shift in medical academic practices in Pakistan is becoming a challenge for medical librarians. Majority of medical schools in Pakistan have started problem based learning, undergrads medical research program and Postgraduate programs. This quantitative study aims to investigate the information literacy program in medical libraries situated in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. The questionnaire administered with in 20 medical colleges libraries using Google Forms as an instrument for data collection and distributed link among all medical college librarians of the province. Findings of the study revealed that majority medical libraries are providing informal information literacy using orientation, bibliographic instructions and occasional lectures as method. The target audience of the information literacy was newly inducted Students. The effectiveness and importance of information literacy program for medical students considered by (87.50%) librarians. This study by large will contribute to modify the current practices of information literacy by the medical libraries.

Keywords: *Information literacy Practices, User Education, Medical Library, Library Orientation, Bibliographic Instructions*

Introduction

Libraries are the integral part of medical institutions. The accreditation council for medical education in Pakistan namely Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC)—now Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) has defined requirements for the library, its resources, space and facilities. Medical colleges are not only offering the undergraduate program but the majority of colleges are offering the postgraduate programs in basic medical and clinical sciences.¹

These medical institutions in Pakistan have different teaching, academic and research practices than non medical institutions. In current era medical education is practicing the Modular study system, Problem based learning; evidence based learning and undergraduate research programs. Due to these new

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trends in medical education, the students, researchers and faculty of medical schools are dependent on library.²

Medical libraries besides, physical books and research material, spent a lot of cost to subscribe specific medical journals, get access of useful databases and other online resources for their patterns. But these all are not that useful after getting the instructions and information literacy program.³

Development of various ICTs (Information Communication Technologies) like Smartphone, Tablets PCs, Laptops and Social Networking applications, frequently information production in different versions, has made the situation complicated for library users (Liu, Q., Lo, P., & Itsumura, H.)⁴. Ogunmodede & Emeahara, expressed that the essence of library information literacy is to equip library users with enough knowledge and information literacy skills to use library resources effectively, efficiently, and independently⁵.

Mohammadi, Mahdi, Alireza Isfandyari Moghaddam, and Mehri Ezadi Yeganeh, investigated the importance of information literacy and students viewpoints. They revealed that students considered the library information literacy necessary and beneficial. Furthermore, students expect that their librarian should be expert and professional, make the course content according to user's need and perception.⁶

Literature Review

The literature related to topic was searched through Google Scholar, LISTA (Library Information Science and Technology Abstract) and LISA (Library and Information Science Abstract) thoroughly and found very few studies published in Pakistan. But it will be the first study in context of information literacy in medical libraries in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Ogunmodede, T. A., & Emeahara, E. N, revealed that library information literacy has a history of two hundred years. The first evidence of library instructions practice was found in the form of lecturing to undergraduates at Harvard College in the 1820. It was also reported that many academic librarians were teaching faculty with part time library appointments to train the library users for their academic purpose.⁵

The aim of Library Information literacy is to train the potential users of the library that how to use library and its resources efficiently and effectively through the acquisition of knowledge and skills in identification, location, retrieval and exploitations of information. Information literacy encompasses orientation, guided tours; continual of training programs, and workshop organized by the library experts. These all activities may be shaped in hard copies as a manual or provided to users in electronic version (Uwakwe, B. S., Onyeneke)⁷.

Medical students and researchers should develop relationship with their librarians to accelerate the research in finding authentic sources for literature review, topic selection, synopses, citation and referencing. Librarians can also help them regarding the journals prestige, impact factor and how to publish work in reputable journals, (Kraft, M).⁸

The accreditation body for medical and health science education in Pakistan requires that the competent professional librarian should supervise the information services department/section and provide the instructions to the users on how to access the online resources (Ullah, M., & Ameen, K.)⁹

Bhatti, R. (2010) many libraries are providing the information literacy but the respondents suggested the common international three-tier structure program consisting orientation to the library, basic bibliographic instruction and advanced bibliographic instructions. They also suggested to provides course content related to instructions which could help the users understanding and importance of information resources regarding their field of specialty.¹⁰

Liu, Q., Allard, B., Lo, collected 426 comparative responses from two universities in Taiwan during the study on information literacy in context of higher education. Information literacy is often referred to library orientation, library instruction, bibliographic instructions and information literacy skills. Results indicated that thesis writing instruction, library orientations, reference services, database instruction were respectively considered important by students.¹¹

Chen & Lin, pointed that an information literacy program can improve the information literacy skill of faculty, students and library professional. The interest and role of librarians is very essential in the design and operation of information literacy programs. But the faculty, students and IT (Information Technology) team should also be on board for having this program. The course of the program should be included in the curriculum to attract the students. The cooperative, problem based, formative and summative evaluations are the important components of information literacy program.¹²

Hayman, R. investigated the need of information literacy and revealed that research emphasizes the need of library user education. They emphasize the use of Open Access materials be the part of user education. Rate of requests for Open Access materials shows that library users need to familiar with Open Access and make efforts for information retrieval by themselves.¹³

Suleiman, S. A., wrote about the most common modules of information literacy used in International Islamic University of Malaysia library are; basic library skill, library briefing, library research skill, online databases searching skills, legal research skills, using In-house databases, navigating internet for special purposes and searching CD-ROM data bases.¹⁴

Objective of the Study

1. To investigate the current situation of information literacy program in the Medical Colleges libraries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.
2. To examine the types and methods of information literacy in practice.
3. To explore the importance of information literacy and its audience
4. To find the Information literacy Program Timings and attendance ratio

Methods and Materials

This quantitative study was conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. All public and private sectors medical colleges recognized by Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) – now Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC), Islamabad were included in this survey.

A semi-structured questionnaire of twelve items was developed on the basis of available literature for the collection of data. The questionnaire covers the demographic information, status of user education; methods used for information literacy in medical institutions and the importance of information literacy in medical libraries.

The list of Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) accredited medical colleges working in the province of KP was acquired from the council office website (www.pmc.gov.pk). The study was conducted from June, 2020 to November 2020. The targeted population of the study was 19 head/in-charge of the medical libraries of KP. The population was not too large, so census base strategy was adopted. The questionnaire was designed using online *Google Forms* and the link was sent to respondents through email. Phone calls and text messages were used as follow-up.

The final responses were downloaded from *Google Forms* and imported to *Microsoft Excel* sheet for eliminations of errors. The response rate was recorded 16 (80%) out of Total 20 Medical Colleges in KP province. The filtered data was analyzed and presented in the section of analysis using tables. Recommendations were made on the basis of results and findings.

Analysis

Practices of the information literacy were investigated in 20 medical colleges of KP in which only 16 responded. The demographics and information about the learning resources, qualification of head, gender and ways of Information literacy were obtained to explore the worth of library and professional human resource.

Table No.1: Demographic Information

Group	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<i>Gender of the Respondents</i>			
Male	14	87.50	87.50%
Female	2	12.50	100.00%
<i>Numbers of Professional Staff</i>			
Up to 5	11	68.75	68.75%
6 to 10	5	31.25	100.00%
<i>Qualification Library Head</i>			
M.Phil/MS	9	56.25	56.25%
MLIS	7	43.75	100.00%
<i>Physical Collection</i>			
Up to 5000	4	25.00	25.00%
5001 to 10,000	6	37.50	62.50%
More Than 10,000	6	37.50	100.00%
<i>Numbers of Subscribed Journals</i>			
No Journals Subscribed	2	12.50	12.50%
Up to 10	2	12.50	25.00%
11 to 20	4	25.00	50.00%
More Than 21	8	50.00	100.00%
<i>HEC Digital Library Access</i>			
Yes	15	93.75	93.75%
No	1	6.25	100.00%

The table 1, demographic show that male librarians are dominates over females. The Majority 9 (56.25 %) of medical librarians having postgraduate degree of *MS-LIS/M. Phil* following by *MLIS*—master degree, 7 (43.75%). The professional staff in medical libraries other than head librarians “up to 5” is dominant 11 (68.75%) followed by 6-10 is 5 (31.25%).

They were also asked about the library resources. A big number of books collections more than 10,000 are holding by 6 (37.50%) libraries and the same number of libraries having 5001 to 10,000 books.

According to collected data the big number of subscribed journals is more than 21 by 8 (50%) libraries following by 11 to 20 journals by 4 (25%) libraries. Result shows that about all 15 (93.75%) libraries has access to Higher Education Commission (HEC) Digital Library.

Respondents were asked regarding Formal/ Informal Information literacy Practice. Table No 2 revealed that majority 14 (87.50%) libraries are providing Informal Information literacy but the 10 (62.50%) libraries are providing Formal Information literacy besides Informal Education. Bahtti, R discovered in her study that 39% of Pakistani university libraries organized user education on formal basis and 68.90 % informal as well as some provide both.¹⁰

Table No.2: Formal/ Informal Information literacy Practice status

S.No	Statements	Yes	No	Total
1	Are you providing Formal Information literacy Program?	10	6	16
	Percent	62.50	37.50	100
2	Are you providing Informal Information literacy Program?	14	2	16
	Percent	87.50	12.50	100

Relevant previous studies discussed different ways of information literacy implementation and organization. Liu, Q., Allard, B., Lo, expressed Information literacy encompasses library orientation, library tours, bibliographic instruction and searching the offline/online databases .¹¹

In the current study Table No 3 shows that the most common type of information literacy is library orientation practiced 11 (68.75%) in libraries, Guided tours and basic bibliographic instructions was 6 (37.50%) in medical libraries of KP.

Table No. 3: Type of Information literacy is practice (N= 16)

S. No	Type	Untrue	True
1	Library Orientation for new students	5 (31.25%)	11 (68.75%)
2	Guided Tours	10 (62.50%)	6 (37.50%)
3	Basic Bibliographic Instructions	10 (62.50%)	6 (37.50%)
4	Advance Bibliographic Instructions	11 (68.75%)	5 (31.25%)
5	Library Handbooks	16 (100.0%)	0 (00.00%)
6	Other	13 (81.25%)	3 (18.75%)

There are few common methods of Information literacy consist Conduct Library Tours, Self Guided Tours, Lectures, Seminars, and Bibliographic Searching practice. Uwakwe investigated the item Method of information literacy in his study. The majority population 200 law students agreed with Lecture method. However, 50 students were strongly agreed with Demonstration method⁷.

Table No. 4 of the current study revealed that Conducted Tours 8 (50 %) and Bibliographic Searching 7 (43.75%) was in practice of the medical libraries in KP, followed by Multimedia Presentation 5 (31.25%) for the purpose of information literacy.

Table No. 4: Methods Used for Information Literacy (N=16)

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Untrue</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>True</i>
1	Conducted Tours	6 (37.50%)	2 (12.50%)	8 (50.00%)
2	Self-Guided Tours	3 (18.75%)	10 (62.50%)	3 (18.75%)
3	Lectures	4 (25.00%)	9 (56.25%)	3 (18.75%)
4	Seminars	10 (62.50%)	4 (25.00%)	2 (12.50%)
5	Multimedia Presentation	5 (31.25%)	6 (37.50%)	5 (31.25%)
6	Bibliographic Searching Practice	6 (37.50%)	3 (18.75%)	7 (43.75%)
7	Other	5 (31.25%)	7 (43.75%)	4 (25.00%)

The question was asked about timing of information literacy program for the libraries of all public and private medical college of the province. Table no 5 shows that majority 9 (56.25%) medical libraries practicing the information literacy in first week of the new session. However, good numbers 6 (37.50%) of medical libraries provide the information literacy on request basis.

Table No. 5: Timing of Information literacy Commencement (N=16)

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Timing of Sessions</i>	<i>Untrue</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>True</i>
1	At First week for New Session	4 (25.00%)	3 (18.75%)	9 (56.25%)
2	At another specific time/event	5 (31.25%)	7 (43.75%)	4 (25.00%)
3	On request of library users	5 (31.25%)	5 (31.25%)	6 (37.50%)
4	Other	4 (25.00%)	7 (43.75%)	5 (31.25%)

Audience attendance in Information literacy Practice

Information literacy is a useful practice for the library users. But it is very essential to consider the needs of users according their level. Needs of fresh students are obviously different from final year, postgraduate or faculty members. Chen, K. N., & Lin, P. C. revealed the needs of pure sciences students will be obviously different from social sciences. Similarly, level wise the need of new entrants cannot be matched with Ph.D students.¹²

Table No. 6: Audience of Information Literacy Program

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Untrue</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>True</i>
1	New students	4 (25.00%)	3 (18.75%)	9 (56.25%)
2	Undergraduates	8 (50.00%)	5 (31.25%)	3 (18.75%)

3	Postgraduates	6 (37.50%)	7 (43.75%)	3 (18.75%)
4	Teaching Faculty	9 (56.25%)	4 (25.00%)	3 (18.75%)
5	All users	5 (31.25%)	3 (18.75%)	8 (50.00%)

Table No 6 shows that the audiences of 9 (56.25%) libraries were new students followed by 8 (50.00%) all users of medical libraries. Attendance of audience is a crucial element to success the information literacy program. Bhatti R.¹⁰ and Jayatissa expressed that the main reason of less interest of users in these sessions was an optional and non credit course.¹⁵

Table No. 7: Users Attendance Rate in Information Literacy Session

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Attendance Rate</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
1	Less than 40 %	04	25.00	25.00
2	40% - 60%	03	18.75	43.75
3	More than 60%	09	56.25	100.00
<i>Total</i>		<i>16</i>	<i>100.00</i>	

The importance of library users attendance highlighted in previous studies. Hence, the question asked in the current study. Table No. 7 revealed result that attendance of more than 60% users is 09 (65.25%) followed by less than 40% attendance is 04 (25%).

Table No. 8: Importance of Information literacy Program in Medical Libraries

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
1	Important	02	12.50%	12.50%
2	Very Important	14	87.50%	100.00 %
3	Not Important	00	00.00%	100.00 %
	<i>Total</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>100.00%</i>	

Library information literacy is basic source to aware the library clients about the appropriate use of library resources. Liu, Q., Lo, P., & Itsumura, H. examined the question to what the students valued the importance of user education. Students were considered the information literacy program most important and should be made the credit course¹¹.

Table no 8 of the current study presents that majorities of 87.50% respondents were of the opinion that the information literacy is very important for their library users. It is noteworthy that no one considered information literacy program in the medical libraries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as “Not Important”.

Findings and Conclusion

The finding of the study revealed that about all (94%) medical libraries in KP have access to HEC (Higher Education Commission) Digital Library and majority 50% libraries are subscribing up to 20 print journals.

The majority 14 (87.50%) of the medical institutional libraries provide the Informal Information literacy followed by 10 (62.50%) with Formal Information literacy using different ways of instructions; orientations, library tour, bibliographical instructions and on the spot guideline/occasional lectures to the users.

The target audiences were “New Students” 9 (56.25%) and all library users 8 (50.00%) for the information literacy programs in the medical libraries. Majority 14 (87.50%) of the responded were considered the information literacy session/ program very important for the library users especially medical science.

It is concluded that information literacy saves the time of users and library staff. A well educated user makes the right use of the available resources in the medical library. All the respondents of this study are agreed with the importance of the Information literacy for their library users.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study 100% respondents are agreed that Information literacy is essential for library users. Therefore, medical libraries should coordinate with management to consider the Information literacy for library users as mandatory. Furthermore, a well designed course content should developed by professional staff for Formal User Education.

The library must also conduct user surveys on regular basis to obtain students' and faculties' perception on Information literacy Programs, which would enable to determine the changing pattern of information seeking behavior of the user community.

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